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Chief, Planning and Review Staff, ORR

16 February 1959

Chief, Industrial Division, ORR

Comments on Proposal for the Rapid Transmittal of Information
Reports and Customer Reactions

1. This Office approves in principle of the effort to analyze and improve current reporting, dissemination, and evaluation procedures, as undertaken in subject report.

2. In general we also support the proposal to increase the capability to process [redacted] information more expeditiously, although we are in no position to evaluate the efficiency of the particular equipment and techniques to be employed. Because the suggested new procedure involves such extra stages as tapewriting, encoding, and decoding, we doubt whether it can be efficiently applied to all reporting from field installations. In our view, although it is important to transmit priority information expeditiously, some types of required information can be processed by more routine and less costly methods, depending on the nature of the material and the research program of the consumer. We do not, therefore, look with favor on proposals, which in order to raise the capability for expeditious transmission of information, further increase the ratio of support to operational personnel.

3. We agree in principle, however, that the proposed new system of rapid transmittal and processing of [redacted] type reports be undertaken experimentally at one base and limited initially to [redacted] information. We cannot, on the basis of our evaluation of reports from the [redacted] agree, however, that it provides the best choice for a pilot study. In our estimation, reports originating in this base have traditionally been too low in priority, too few in number, and too low in reliability to provide the basis for a valid experiment. If reports received from the [redacted] and passed through the [redacted] are to be included, the total volume of [redacted] traffic would no doubt be greatly increased, but the test would still not be appropriate from the point of view of this Office, because that portion of the [redacted] product which we value most highly consists of [redacted] reports, generally documentary in nature. These comprise economic reports, in the [redacted] not easily susceptible of flexowriter transcription. We therefore recommend a re-examination of the question of where the pilot project should be located.

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4. We also recommend that in establishing a pilot project to increase the capacity to process [REDACTED] reports, an effort be made to review the criteria by which reports are presently selected for [REDACTED] treatment.

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5. We support the desire to improve guidance to the field, particularly if the volume of irrelevant reporting can be reduced, but we are not convinced that further mechanization of the evaluation process, at least as proposed by the report under consideration, provides workable solutions to these problems. Nor do we believe that the feedback of information to DD/I type supervisors will be as useful as is suggested by the report, although feedback of this type could be an asset to the operation of this Office.

6. Our concern over the value of the mechanization of the processing of the Initial Reaction Sheet (IRS) is based on the belief that our operation is so specialized that relatively few analysts have a primary concern in the average [REDACTED] report. We therefore question the advantages to be derived from the application of coding, punching and sorting techniques to our operation. We fear that if this process is mechanized the reactions of analysts with primary responsibility for a particular subject will be outvoted by the mechanical nature of the responses as a whole. 25X1D0g

7. Although the IRS system may provide the field with a quick evaluation the reaction will be statistical, mechanical, and inflexible. No provision is made for the rapid evaluation of parts of a report nor for the rapid followup by requests for additional information along particular lines. Moreover, no provision seems to have been made to correlate the IRS with the more detailed evaluations which are eventually to make their way to the field. How will the field know when a detailed evaluation supports or conflicts with a previously received summary of IRS reactions?

8. It should be noted that analysts will need to keep copies of IRS evaluations for branch records. Therefore this sheet should be provided with at least one attached carbon and will not completely replace the present bulky Form 39 evaluation.

9. Although the proposal to provide DD/I supervisors with periodic machine runs of the IRS evaluations made by their analysts offers attractions as a supervisory device, such lists will not in themselves contain sufficient information about the [REDACTED] report to assist supervisors in improving the quality of the evaluation prepared. 25X1D0g

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by their analysts. Supervisors will have to review evaluations at the time they are made, as at present. It is doubtful if such runs are worth the effort. In our opinion the mechanization implicit in the proposed IRS system needs further study.

10. This Office shares the concern for greater control in the satisfaction of its requirements through the routing of [redacted] type 25X1D0g reports. The periodic sending of machine runs of lists of such reports to responsible analysts could be used to improve control over the routing process, but such lists in many cases would be so long as to require a burdensome tallying effort by the analyst, unless the lists could contain not only the [redacted] number, but meaningful report titles. 25X1D0g

11. The proposal to route reports centrally to individual analysts contains several attractive features. If feasible such routing would save time and labor now expended in the office Reading Panel as well as in the branches. It is questionable, however, whether the reading requirements of analysts should be determined empirically, as proposed, on the basis of machine runs of reports actually routed to particular analysts during a test period, even though the report of the committee tempers this suggestion in proposing that this technique be supplemented by discussion with individual analysts. For control purposes it is essential that analyst requirements be screened and coordinated on a branch level by branch and divisional supervisors. Such branch requirements, revised for the Office as a whole during the last year, are now on deposit with the office Reading Panel. It would not be difficult to convert these requirements into requirements for individual analysts, should centralized routing of [redacted] reports be 25X1D0g initiated. As at present such requirements should be subject to supervisory control and coordination as well as periodic review.

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